Necessary Components to Reduce and Eliminate Solitary Confinement

- Policies that limit the use of room confinement to short periods and situations that immediately threaten the safety of youth or others, in which the youth is released from room confinement and returned to programming as soon as the youth regains self-control. Policies include clear guidelines on when youth should be released from room confinement (“exit strategies”). Policies are clearly communicated to all staff and to youth in the facility.

- Shared values about the very limited use of room confinement that are part of the institutional culture. Staff who do not share those values or adhere to facility policies may need to be transferred out of the facility.

- Strong and consistent leadership at the unit level and at the facility level.

- Sufficient numbers of direct care staff to adequately supervise youth and maintain appropriate staff-to-youth ratios.

- Hiring of staff who have necessary skills and temperament, such as good listening skills, patience, and genuine caring for youth

- Sufficient numbers of mental health professionals to meet youths’ needs, including individual planning, counseling, crisis management, and behavioral contracts, as well as multi-disciplinary treatment teams. Incorporation of mental health staff into interventions for youth who present challenging behavior.

- Adequate staff training on de-escalation techniques, adolescent development, and conflict resolution that is connected to facility policies on the use of room confinement.

- Opportunities for staff to express their concerns about the transition away from use of room confinement.

- Small living units (or, if physical plant has large living units, break up of youth into small programming groups).

- Modification of the physical environment, e.g., with murals and other artwork, to make it less sterile and prison-like.

- Well-designed behavior management programs that emphasize strong positive incentives for good behavior while including sanctions for major rules violations.

- Robust programming and continual activities to keep youth busy.
• Full due process procedures, including the right to appeal the initial decision, for youth alleged to have committed major rule violations.

• Opportunities for youth to express their concerns in the facility, e.g., in community meetings in living units.

• Engagement of parents and relatives, including regular contact with youth and involvement in planning for release from the facility.

• Independent and objective grievance process that is free from retaliation.

• Availability of technical assistance to the superintendent and facility by individuals who have experience reducing the use of room confinement.

• Regular monitoring of the use of room confinement and robust quality assurance/quality improvement, including regular collection and analysis of data on the use of room confinement.